

4. AIRPORT CLASSIFICATION

Classifications serve as a framework for describing the existing function of each airport in the system and as the reference for evaluating how system airports have changed their functions or are projected to change their functions as a result of accommodating forecast demand.

Virginia Airport Classifications

There are many ways that states discuss airport classifications. Some discussions are general in nature and identify functions without specifying design standards. On the other hand, some states identify detailed lists of facilities as goals for airports with a particular functional classification. Virginia's classification system identifies airport function, primary economic role, optimal Airport Reference Code (ARC), and to a lesser extent, funding category eligibility.

A series of discussions with the Department of Aviation and the Study Advisory Group were held to reassess the existing classification system. These meetings revealed that the classification system implemented as part of the 1990 VATSP Update continues to serve the needs and desires of the Commonwealth. Consequently, the existing classification system will continue to be used for the 2000 VATSP Update.

The descriptions provided below for each of the five classifications provide a broad definition of the airport roles and the type of facilities at each airport.

Commercial Service (CS). Commercial Service airports provide scheduled air carrier and/or commuter service to domestic and, in some cases, international destinations for surrounding communities. Established Commercial Service airports are included in this category. If a noncommercial service airport acquires scheduled passenger service, it would qualify as a Commercial Service airport upon reaching 10,000 annual enplanements. Commercial Service airports should be developed at a minimum according to the Federal Aviation Administration Airport Reference Code (ARC)-Category "C" design criteria. A precision instrument approach should be provided if technically and economically feasible. Such airports are eligible to receive Air Carrier entitlement, as well as, Air Carrier/Reliever discretionary funding from the Commonwealth Airport Fund.

Reliever (RL). General aviation airports in metro areas intended to reduce congestion at large commercial service airports by providing general aviation pilots with comparable landside and airside facilities. To accommodate the full range of general aviation aircraft, reliever airports should be developed to ARC-C design criteria when feasible. A precision instrument approach should be provided if technically and economically feasible. Such airports are eligible for Air Carrier/Reliever discretionary funding from the Commonwealth.

General Aviation Regional (GR). Service areas for Regional airports are often multi-jurisdictional due to geographic isolation or the relative scarcity of other airport services and facilities. Regional airports serve a large market area. They provide a full range of aviation facilities and services to the GA flying public, including jet fuel, instrument approaches, full service fixed based operations, corporate hangars and GA terminal facilities. These airports should be developed to ARC-C category design criteria when feasible. A precision instrument approach should be provided if technically and economically feasible and where justified by the level of operations. Regional airports are eligible for General Aviation discretionary funding by the Commonwealth.

General Aviation Community (GC). Provide general aviation facilities and services to business and recreational users. Community airports typically serve their respective communities or a smaller market area. The services provided by Community airports typically include aircraft rental, flight training and AvGas sales. Community airports should be developed to ARC-B category design criteria. A non-precision instrument approach should be considered if technically and economically feasible and where justified by the level of operations. Community airports are eligible for General Aviation discretionary funding by the Commonwealth.

Local Service (LO). Local service airports are generally low activity facilities and provide limited general aviation facilities to their respective communities. These airports typically have development constraints which preclude substantial expansion. Such constraints include airspace conflicts, environmental concerns, topography, competing aeronautical services, surrounding land use patterns and ownership status. When technically and economically feasible, Local Service airports should be developed to an ARC A or B category design criteria. These airports are not eligible for Commonwealth funding except for safety and preservation projects. Local service airports must meet minimum requirements for licensing in accordance with 5.1-7 of the Code of Virginia and 24 VAC 5-20-140 and may be in close proximity to larger airports in surrounding communities.

Composition of Virginia's Airport System

The Commonwealth has 68 existing public-use airports including the newly opened Stafford County Airport which is classified as a Reliever. The Commonwealth's classification of these airports is shown in **Table 1**. There are also two new facilities under development by the Department of Aviation and the FAA. Lee County and Tappahannock (estimated to be completed by 2005) will be General Aviation Community airports, and will replace existing Local Service airports.

AC- Table 1
Number of Airports by Classification Category

Classification	2001
Commercial Service	9
Reliever	8
General Aviation Regional	17
General Aviation Community	16
Local Service	17